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HELENA BONHAM CARTER LAUNCHES VALENTINE'S DAY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN

Refuge, national domestic violence charity, is launching a new campaign aimed at educating women about some of the signs of abuse.

Research shows that many women aren't aware of the ways in which abusive men control their partners. Yet understanding the signs earlier could help save them from a lifetime of abuse, or even death. It is a shocking fact that 12 women a week in this country die as a result of domestic violence*.

The campaign, which launches today (10th February, 2010) in time for Valentine's Day, will ask women to think about whether their partner's behaviour is caring or controlling.

The 'Care or Control?' campaign features four different adverts which use teddy bears to depict domestic violence. This approach takes a radical departure from the frequently used images of battered women and has been done in the hope that women specifically, and society generally, will be less likely to dismiss the adverts as not being relevant to them personally.

The adverts feature a domineering male bear who holds a love heart with a message written on it. At first glance the bears and hearts mimic the stereotypical bears often given at Valentine's Day as tokens of love. But when read more closely, and in full, the messages are in fact sinister and menacing: 'you FALL FOR ME every time'; 'you will BE MINE forever'; 'ONLY YOU make me do this'; 'I WANT YOU all to myself'. Each of the four adverts explores a different form of controlling behaviour - jealousy, isolation, blame and charm. All adverts raise the question - is the bear in the advert being caring or controlling? All adverts drive readers to www.refuge.org.uk to find out more about the behaviours and take part in the 'Care or Control?' debate.

Acclaimed actress Helena Bonham Carter and long term supporter of Refuge's work says: "The stereotypical view of domestic violence is a woman with bruising, black eyes and broken bones. But sadly through my work with Refuge I've learnt that violence is just one aspect of abuse. Thanks to the support Refuge provides I've met many women who have been controlled in more subtle ways, but who have still lived in fear, walking on eggshells. I believe this campaign has the ability to reach out to thousands upon thousands of women so they can escape years of abuse and a

lifetime of misery. I applaud Refuge and hope that everyone will get involved in the 'Care or Control?' debate at www.refuge.org.uk"

Karen Smith, 41, says: "When I first met my ex he was very charming, but the good times started to become interspersed with bad times. He would become very jealous about any time I spent with male friends. He would make me feel bad if I complained about it, so I didn't challenge him. So after a while I felt couldn't spend time with them at all. At the time I didn't realise that he was doing this to control me. I consider myself lucky that I got away from my ex the first time he hit me and I got help from Refuge. I hope That Refuge's 'Care or Control?' campaign will help other women to recognise some of the signs of controlling behaviour and get help before it's too late."

Sandra Horley OBE, chief executive at Refuge, says: "Domestic violence is all about power and control. It is unacceptable for a man to control and bully his partner. If a woman is forced to alter her behaviour because she is frightened of her partner's reaction then she is being abused. Jealousy, isolation, blame and charm are techniques of control which are frequently used by men who perpetrate domestic violence.

"Domestic violence takes lives and ruins lives. We hope that Refuge's new 'Care or Control?' campaign will drive awareness and understanding of an issue which affects 1 in 4 women in this country. I hope that everyone will find out more about the campaign at www.refuge.org.uk - domestic violence affects us all, it is a societal problem not an individual problem."

* Two women a week are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales and 10 women commit suicide every week in this country to escape domestic violence.

ENDS

- Broadcast - interview opportunities with Sandra Horley, Refuge chief executive and Karen Smith, who has experienced domestic violence
- Press - photography with Helena Bonham Carter

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Notes to editors

- The campaign, created by G2 UK on a pro bono basis, will comprise both six- and 48-sheet posters, as well as press and digital ads.
- The campaign is supported by a microsite hosted at <http://www.refuge.org.uk/>
- Media consultancy services were through UM London.

Refuge

Refuge is the largest specialist service provider of domestic violence services in the country. Alongside providing safe, emergency accommodation and emotional and practical support to

women and children experiencing domestic, Refuge also provides services for children, individual and group counselling for women experiencing domestic violence and community based outreach services for women. Its services include specialist refuge and outreach projects for black and minority ethnic communities. It has a growing team of independent domestic violence advocates whose primary role is to support a woman through the civil and criminal justice system. On any given day Refuge is supporting over 1,000 women and children. It also runs the Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline in partnership with Women's Aid. For more information, please visit <http://www.refuge.org.uk>